

of the Kaingáng faith in the efficacy of "the laying on of hands." We¹⁷⁵⁶ already know what the multiplication of caresses means to the Kaingáng in the way of security, and the gentle application of warm infusions of herbs or bark to all parts of the body of a sick person is not different in kind from the reciprocal stroking of two young men lying in affectionate embrace. Still another way of curing the sick is to heat one's hands near the fire and lay them gently on the body of the patient. This high valuation of cutaneous contact is one aspect of the Kaingáng special interest in sensation.^[227]

But the Kaingáng do not only cure from without, they also cure from¹⁷⁵⁶ within; and to that end they administer a variety of herb and bark in-²⁷⁸ fusions in warm water. These are rubbed all over the surface of the body, for the Kaingáng cannot conceive of treating the inside of the body without also treating the outside.²² Anyone at all may perform this tender and solicitous task, and it is no rarity to see a Kaingáng step aside from the trail to cut a few plants for someone else or to see him come back from the hunt with a handful of herbs for medicine. A number of these herbs are used as panaceas—they are applied with equal faith to relieve a headache or a pain in the chest or to heal a cut.²³

Of all the herbs and barks that the Kaingáng use to treat the sick, one²²⁷ alone is based on something more than this kind of selection. The use of *áyólo nya tēi*, "tapir's raw food," rests on a strong sense of its vital power. Tapir's raw food grows everywhere in the Kaingáng country. It is the favorite eating of the tapir and enjoys a wider use as a remedy among the Kaingáng than any other plant in their medicinal catalogue. But this herb is used not only to cure sickness but also to prevent evil. It is spread over the body of a dead tapir to please its *kupléng* so that it will not take all the rest of its brethren with it and leave mankind to starve, and in the same way it is placed all around the body of a dead infant to induce its *kupléng* to return to its mother. When a widow's hair and nails are cut, they are^[164] mixed with tapir's raw food before they are thrown into the water, so that they will not rot; and when she returns to camp after her isolation, tapir's raw food is strewn in her path to drive off the *kupléng* of her husband. So,

²² Nowadays they do swallow the white man's remedies without rubbing them over their bodies.

²³ Their use is based not on exact knowledge of their efficacy in specific cases but on the simple faith that they are beneficial. The employment of herbs in this naive uncritical manner must lie at the roots of some of the great medicinal discoveries of primitive peoples, like quinine. Just as the Kaingáng scrape the bark of a number of trees and use them indiscriminately to relieve a variety of ills, the Indians of the interior of South America may have used the bark of the quina tree for a number of ailments until they observed that one disease in particular, malaria, yielded to it, whereas others did not. This marked the real discovery of quinine, one of the American Indian's great contributions to the relief of human suffering.